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## Forum at 4

'Painter, paint!': the old philistine admonition to artists to keep their ideas to themselves, and get on with the production of marketable works which may (but preferably don't) embody those ideas, dies hard. And where music is concerned, this philistinism is so robustly healthy, at least in the Anglo-Saxon world, that audiences, and promoters even more so, have become downright suspicious of composers or performers who actually want to **talk** about the social and intellectual underlays of their work. Happily, since the First Sydney Spring is a festival of Visual Art as well as Music, and since the presence of three young avant garde artists from post-Maoist China should in itself be food for thought and talk, the relative willingness of practitioners and critics within the visual arts to engage in public discourse and debate may serve to encourage the musicians.

New art music, heaven knows, has more than enough thorns in its crown to elicit debate. The idea that artists have become somehow alienated from their public is, at very least, two centuries old. Yet few people would deny that, where music is concerned, the situation is now rather drastic: the Music Museum, it seems, has little room for Modern Art. Even the recent outbreaks of New Simplicity, New Romanticism and, by way of summary, New Accessibility, have aroused less public enthusiasm than their proponents had hoped and expected. Maybe, as the German critic Heinz-Klaus Metzger once put it: "in the past eighty years, it's not music, but the **audience** that has become incomprehensible".

Among the major current debates about new music in this country, certain themes stand out: questions of accessibility, national identity, social relevance and, not least, the masculinist/feminist debate. The selection of works for this festival was made, unashamedly, **without** regard for any of these factors: it simply reflected the personal convictions of the Artistic Director and his advisers (myself included). That disregard of socio-political expediencies will doubtless cause offence in some quarters. Tant pis, I would say: the creation and presentation of art should arise from conviction, not expediency. Other festival organisers, with other convictions, will organise festivals with very different priorities, and good luck to them!

The daily forum is, of course, an opportunity for the composers, performers and organisers of the First Sydney Spring to give verbal form to **their** convictions; it's a chance for you to meet our productive and reproductive artists. But it's also an opportunity for you to air **your** views, whether positive or negative. We hope to interest you, but we also look forward to being interested, intrigued, and perhaps infuriated, by you. In short, we hope to see you (and hear from you) at the Forum at 4.

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